

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 LONDON 05299 01 OF 02 311212Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /059 W
-----311300Z 091528 /22

R 311157Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2171
INFO AMCONSUL EDINBURGH
AMCONSUL BELFAST

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 05299

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PDEV, PINT, UK
SUBJECT: STECHFORD BY-ELECTION

SUMMARY: TODAY'S STECHFORD BY-ELECTION IS AN IMPORTANT CONTEST FOR THE THREE MAJOR PARTIES. REGARDED BY THE NATIONAL MEDIA AS A TEST OF THE RECENT LIB-LAB DEAL, A POOR SHOWING BY ANY OF THE THREE PARTIES COULD HAVE IMPORTANT PSYCHOLOGICAL REPERCUSSIONS WITHIN THE PARTY AND AFFECT ITS NATIONAL POPULARITY. THE TORIES HAVE RUN THE BEST CAMPAIGN AND HAVE A CHANCE OF PICKING UP THIS TRADITIONAL LABOR SEAT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE STECHFORD BY-ELECTION TODAY (MARCH 31) IS ATTRACTING INTEREST AS THE FIRST OOPULAR TEST OF THE LIB-LAB DEAL. FOR THE GOVERNMENT, THE LOSS OF THIS TRADITIONAL LABOR SEAT WOULD REPRESENT A SERIOUS PSYCHOLOGICAL SETBACK. A TORY VICTORY WOULD CONTINUE THE PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT AND HELP REVIVE TORY MORALE AFTER THE EVENTS OF LAST WEEK. FOR THE LIBERALS, WHO HAVE CAMPAIGNED HARD IN STECHFORD, A SIGNIFICANT DECLINE IN SUPPORT COULD RAISE SERIOUS DOUBTS ABOUT THE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 LONDON 05299 01 OF 02 311212Z

WISDOM OF THE ALLIANCE WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

2. THE BY-ELECTION HAS BEEN CALLED TO FILL THE SEAT VACATED BY EC PRESIDENT ROY JENKINS. HE HAD HELD IT SINCE ITS CREATION IN 1950, AND WAS RETURNED BY A HEALTHY MAJORITY OF 11,923 IN THE OCTOBER 1974 ELECTION. ON THAT OCCASION, LABOR RECEIVED 57.6 PER CENT OF THE

TOTAL VOTES; THE CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS, 27.8 PER CENT AND 14.6 PER CENT, RESPECTIVELY. /WITH AN ELECTORATE OF SKILLED MANUAL WORKERS SITUATED IN NORTH-EAST BIRMINGHAM, STECHFORD HAS -- UP TO NOW -- BEEN

POLL RELEASED THIS WEEK (RELIABILITY UNKNOWN) SHOWED A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THE ELECTORATE STILL UNDECIDED, WITH THE LABOR AND CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATES IN A DEAD HEAT AMONG THE COMMITTED VOTERS.

3. LABOR CANDIDATE AND FORMER MP TERRY DAVIS HAS CONDUCTED A LOW-KEY AND SOMEWHAT DEFENSIVE CAMPAIGN. DAVIS HAS HAD THE SUPPORT OF PRICES SECRETARY ROY HATTERSLEY AND EDUCATION SECRETARY SHIRLEY UILLIAMS IN TRYING TO CONVINCE THE ELECTORATE THAT THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST INFLATION WAS WORKING, AND THAT THINGS WOULD IMPROVE IF THE GOVERNMENT WERE LEFT TO FINISH ITS JOB. WHILE THE ELECTION IS BILLED NATIONALLY AS A TEST OF THE LIB-LAB DEAL, THE MAIN ISSUE FOR THE ELECTORATE SEEMS TO BE RISING ORICES. DAVIS HAS BEEN COUNTING HEAVILY ON HELP FROM DENIS HEALEY'S BUDGET MESSAGE AND ITS ANNOUNCED TAX CUTS TO BRING AROUND THE UNCOMMITTED VOTERS. YET EVEN THIS WEAPON SEEMS TO BE DOUBLE-EDGED: HEALEY'S CALL FOR INCREASES IN THE ROAD TAX AND THE PRICE OF GASOLINE HAVE LITTLE APPEAL TO A CONSTITUENCY WHICH DEPENDS ON THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY FOR ITS LIVELIHOOD.

4. IN CONTRAST, ANDREW MACKAY, DAVIS' CONSERVATIVE OPPONENT, HAS CONDUCTED AN ACTIVE AND AGGRESSIVE CAMPAIGN. HE HAS CONCENTRATED HIS CAMPAIGN ON THE ISSUES OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 LONDON 05299 01 OF 02 311212Z

INFLATION, LAW AND ORDER, AND IMMIGRATION. HIS CALL FOR A COMPLETE BAN ON IMMIGRATION HAS QONE BEYOND THE POSITION OF HIS PARTY AND HAS GAINED FOR HIM A MEASURE OF NATIONAL ATTENTION. MRS. THATCHER HAS PRIVATELY EXPRESSED DOUBTS ABOUT WINNING IN STECHFORD. HOWEVER, THIS WELL-RUN CAMPAIGN, WHICH INCLUDED A CLOSELY-ORCHESTRATED 'MEET-THE-PEOPLE' SWING BY MRS. THATCHER HERSELF, MAY WELL END IN A CONSERVATIVE VICTORY.

5. THE LIBERALS, WHO HAVE INVESTED A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF EFFORT IN THE STECHFORD CAMPAIGN, PERHAPS STAND TO LOSE THE MOST. WHILE PROBABLY NOT A TRUE TEST OF THE LIB-LAB DEAL, STECHFORD WILL BE SEEN AS SUCH BY THE NATIONAL MEDIA AND A POOR SHOWING BY THE LIBERALS WILL REFLECT DIRECTLY ON THEIR DECISION TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT. PARTY LEADER DAVID STEEL, MEETING RECENTLY WITH A GROUP OF EMBOFFS, STATED THAT HE THOUGHT THE LIBERALS WOULD DO WELL IN STECHFORD, A VIEW HE HAD

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 LONDON 05299 02 OF 02 311209Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /059 W
-----311231Z 091422 /22

R 311157Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2172
INFO AMCONSUL EDINBURGH
AMCONSUL BELFAST

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 05299

REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES TO THE MEDIA AS WELL. THE
LIBERAL CANDIDATE, GRAHAM GOSPIL, THE ONLY RESIDENT OF
THE CONSTITUENCY AND THE ONLY CANDIDATE TO STAND THERE
PREVIOUSLY, HAS BEEN PUBLICLY AT ODDS WITH THE LEADERS
OF HIS PARTY. GOSPIL ARGUED LOUDLY AGAINST ANY DEAL
WITH THE GOVERNMENT, THEN ENDED UP HAVING TO DEFEND THE
LIB-LAB PACT ON THE STUMP. HIS ELECTION EVE COMMENTS
ABOUT HAVING HAD A "COCKED UP" CAMPAIGN FROM THE START
DID NOT HELP. THE LOCAL PARTY WORKERS HAVE BEEN AT ODDS
WITH THE NATIONAL PARTY ON THE ALLIANCE ISSUE AND HAVE
COMPLAINED THAT THEY HAVE LOST ANY CHANCE OF ATTRACTING
THE PROTEST VOTES WHICH HELPED ACCOUNT FOR THE 14.6 PER
CENT SHOWING IN THEIR LAST OUTING. STEEL HAS MADE THREE
CAMPAIGN TRIPS TO THE CONSTITUENCY, AND HAS DEFENDED THE
LIB-LAB DEAL ARGUING THAT A VOTE FOR THE LIBERALS MEANT
A CHECK ON SOCIALISM.

6. MINOR PARTY CANDIDATES INCLUDE ANDREW BRONS OF THE
RIGHTIST NATIONAL FRONT AND PAUL FOOT (NEPHEW OF
MICHAEL FOOT) OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY. WHILE
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 LONDON 05299 02 OF 02 311209Z

THE 'EVENING MAIL' POLL INDICATED ONLY 3 PER CENT OF THE VOTERS SUPPORTING THE NATIONAL FRONT, THE RESULTS COULD EXCEED THIS LEVEL IN THE ACTUAL POLLING.

7. UHILE THE CONTEST IS EXTREMELY CLOSE BETWEEN THE LABOR AND CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATES, AT THIS POINT THE CONSERVATIVES SEEM TO HAVE A SLIGHT EDGE. THE BUDGET MESSAGE HAS NOT HAD NOTICEABLE RESULTS IN BRINGING UNCOMMITTED VOTERS AROUND TO LABOR, AND THE MORE AGGRESSIVE AND EFFICIENT CONSERVATIVE CAMPAIGN SEEMS TO HAVE MOMENTUM ON ITS SIDE. THE LIBERALS MAY SUFFER BADLY, AND SOME LIBERAL SUPPORT WILL NO DOUBT SHIFT TO THE CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE.

8. COMMENT: THIS BY-ELECTION IS OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE AS EACH OF THE PARTIES STAND TO LOSE A MEASURE OF NATIONAL PRESTIGE IF IT DOES NOT PERFORM WELL. A TORY VICTORY OR NEAR-WIN WILL HELP THEIR FORTUNES CONSIDERABLY, BUILD UP MOMENTUM TOWARD THE AIM OF UNSEATING THE GOVERNMENT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, AND SHOULD ENHANCE THE IMAGE OF MRS. THATCHER, PERHAPS COUNTERING THE DOUBTS RAISED ABOUT HER CENSURE DEBATE PERFORMANCE. FOR THE GOVERNMENT, A LOSS AT STECHFORD WILL NOT ONLY MEAN THE LOSS OF AN IMPORTANT LABOR SEAT, BUT IT WILL HAVE SOME EFFECT ON THE UPCOMING BY-ELECTION IN GRIMSBY, A CONSIDERABLY WEAKER LABOR SEAT IN NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES. A LABOR LOSS COUPLED WITH A DECLINE IN LIBERAL VOTES WOULD SHAKE THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE LIB-LAB ALLIANCE, MAKING THE PROSPECT OF A GENERAL ELECTION THIS YEAR MORE LIKELY.

SPIERS

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LABOR RELATIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES, NATIONAL ELECTIONS, ELECTION FORECASTS, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 31-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977LONDON05299
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770110-0709
Format: TEL
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t1977033/aaaaaclid.tel
Line Count: 204
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fe6720b3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3020290
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STECHFORD BY-ELECTION SUMMARY: TODAY'S STECHFORD BY-ELECTION IS AN IMPORTANT CONTEST FOR THE THREE MAJOR PARTIES. REGARDED BY
TAGS: PDEV, PINT, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fe6720b3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009